

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

SIXTH STREET AT CONSTITUTION AVENUE NW WASHINGTON DC 20565 • 737-4215 extension 224

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

GENUINE AND FAKE RODIN DRAWINGS

GO ON SPECIAL EXHIBITION AT NATIONAL GALLERY

WASHINGTON, D.C. November 12, 1971. A group of 132 drawings by the late 19th-century French sculptor Auguste Rodin (1840-1917), and 28 forgeries of the artist's work, will go on view November 20th at the National Gallery of Art. The exhibition will be shown in the Central Gallery, ground floor, through January 23rd, 1972.

Entitled Rodin Drawings—True and False, the exhibition is the first systematic survey of the chronology of Rodin's drawings, and sets up comparisons between authentic Rodins and forgeries. There will be a special section of unlabeled drawings in which visitors may exercise their own connoisseurship to distinguish forged from authentic works on the basis of what they have learned in the other parts of the show.

The genuine Rodin graphics are in various media, including charcoal, watercolor, pen and ink, gouache and drypoint. Included are early academic figure studies (c. 1855-60); drawings from the period between c. 1865-c. 1885, dealing with impassioned fantasy and themes from literature (particularly Dante's Inferno); and, from the artist's late period after c. 1895, drawings and simplified watercolors delineating the nude figure in motion. The exhibition also includes a group of Rodin's drawings of French architecture, primarily studies of cathedrals, with corresponding photographic details of the monuments themselves. In addition, a small selection of related Rodin sculptures from the National Gallery and from private American collections are displayed among

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the drawings and prints.

The drawings have been lent by private collectors in the United States and abroad and by public collections in Paris, Rotterdam, Tokyo, and American cities including Boston, Chicago, New York, and Los Angeles.

The National Gallery has prepared a 14-page brochure with 20 illustrations, giving the visitor a complete checklist of the show, a plan of the installation with explanatory notes, and a special section for recording judgments in the true/false section. The brochure will sell for 25 cents.

The exhibition has been organized by Dr. Albert Elsen, Professor of Art History at Stanford University, and J. Kirk T. Varnedoe, a National Gallery of Art Finley Fellow for 1970-72 and a doctoral candidate at Stanford. Professor Elsen and Mr. Varnedoe have also collaborated on a new book, entitled The Drawings of Rodin, which will be issued in conjunction with the exhibition. Mr. Varnedoe contributes the most extensive chronological perspective of Rodin's work as a draftsman yet published, and a second essay dealing with the problem of forgeries. The latter essay discusses and illustrates the three forged styles presented in the exhibition: that of Ernst Durig, and those of two forgers now identified only as Hand A and Hand B. The book also includes chapters by Mrs. Victoria Thorson, who writes on "Symbolism and Conservatism in Rodin's Late Drawings," and by Mrs. Elisabeth Chase Geissbuhler, an authority on Rodin's drawings of architecture.

The idea for this exhibition was initiated by Professor Elsen at Stanford following the settlement of the Ernst Durig estate, which included 155 forgeries (see "The Great Rodin - His Flagrant Faker," by Dorothy Seiberling, Life, June 4, 1965). A Ford Foundation graduate fellowship, administered by Stanford, and a special study grant from the B. G. Cantor Art Foundation, Los

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Angeles, made possible Mr. Varnedoe's research into Rodin's work in 1969 and 1970. Mr. Varnedoe, who is preparing his doctoral thesis for the art department of Stanford, has continued his research this year with the aid of a David E. Finley Fellowship from the National Gallery of Art.

A series of three Sunday lectures will be given at 4:00 p.m. in the Gallery's auditorium in conjunction with the exhibition:

- November 21: "Drawing and the True Rodin"
Speaker: Albert Elsen, Professor
of Art History, Stanford
University
- November 28: "Drawing and the False Rodins"
Speaker: J. Kirk T. Varnedoe,
Stanford University, and
David E. Finley Fellow,
National Gallery of Art
- December 5: "Rodin and Tradition"
Speaker: Horst W. Janson, Professor
of Fine Arts, New York
University

Rodin Drawings—True and False will also be seen at The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, from March 9 through May 14, 1972.

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For further information contact Katherine Warwick, Assistant to the Director, or Diane Nesley, Public Information Office, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. 20565, area code 202, 737-4215, ext. 224.